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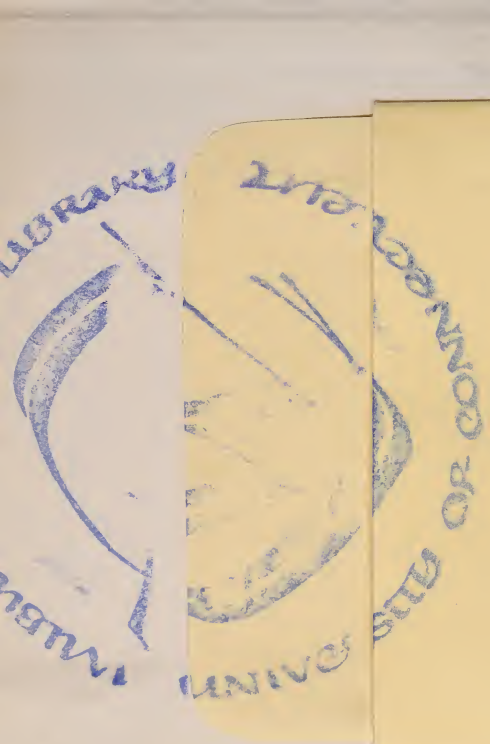

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VICTORY OR DEATH

AND OTHER POEMS

By MILDRED LOW

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1916

BY

MILDRED LOW

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VICTORY OR DEATH ?

We see our soldiers march away
To victory—or is it death ?
" A splendid lot of men," we say,
With sudden tears and catching breath.

One, dry-eyed, watches them from sight.
" I lost my son last month in France,"
He says : " I'd go myself to-night,
With these chaps, if I had the chance."

Oh, faith divine ! that proudly gives
In sacrifice, an only son.
He grasps a truth that ever lives,
That victory and death are one !

"PEACE ON EARTH"

Peace on the earth this Christmas-tide !
Once more the angelic chorus
Proclaims the Sun of Righteousness
Is risen with healing for us.
Though war its baleful shadow casts,
The Father all-commanding
Still folds us in that perfect peace
That passeth understanding.

"Seek first the Kingdom of our God,
Its righteousness pursuing."
In sweet obedience of the law,
We failed to our undoing—

A sensuous pleasure, slothful ease
And luxury demanding,
Unmindful of the better peace
That passeth understanding.

The Empire's need has roused her sons.
Forgetting party faction,
The mean pursuit of sordid gains,
The selfish, base inaction,
Forth to the battle-charge they fare,
With heart and mind expanding,
Responsive to the inward peace,
That passeth understanding.

At home, aghast, benumbed, forlorn,
We wait each dreaded morrow,
Pierced by the cry of kindred souls,
In dire distress and sorrow.

But they who seek to render aid,
And comfort the desponding,
In loving service find a peace
That passeth understanding.

The sense of loss is deep and keen
For countless heroes sleeping.
O'er all the darkened land is heard
The sound of Rachel weeping.
Yet each heart knows a joy and pride
With selfish grief contending,
And grief is swallowed up in peace
That passeth understanding.

" Peace on the earth," then be our song,
" Glory in the highest Heaven,"
E'en though with anguish, terror, shame,
The nation's heart be riven.

The Eucharist we celebrate,
This sacrifice demanding,
Shall keep us in the peace of God
That passeth understanding.

THE WAY WITH THE MILITARY

But a slip of a lad he went away
To fight for his King and his country.
And I hadn't the heart to make him stay,
Though his father was bad, but he'd only say,
"Please God, he'll come back a man some day;
'Tis the way with the military."

He was always wanting to be a man
And fight for his King and his country.
"An', Ma," he'd say, "wouldn't it be gran'
If I'd shoot an' shoot, till the enemy ran?"
And his play was all on the soldier plan,
Like he'd seen the military.

He says for a man it is just and due
To fight for his King and his country.
His grandfather fell in battle, too,
An' his great-grandad was at Waterloo,
And uncles and cousins, not a few,
They were all in the military.

So he's bound he'd be one to strike a blow
And fight for his King and his country.
An' his father's dyin', and funds is low,
But I'm proud in my heart to have him go;
I'm a soldier's daughter, myself, and so
I incline to the military.

THE COLLECT FOR PEACE

O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom; Defend us, Thy humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in Thy defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries, through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O God, the Author of our peace,
Whose service perfect freedom is,
There standeth our eternal life,
In knowledge of Thy mysteries.

Thou lovest concord, yet we strive!
Forgive Thy servants' many faults!
Defend us now, we humbly pray,
In all our enemies' assaults.

That through the might of Jesus Christ,
Thy people in the darkest hour,
May surely trust in Thy defence,
Nor fear the adversaries' power.

"FAITH WITH THANKSGIVING"

In Memoriam: EDITH CAVELL
Martyred in Belgium, October 12, 1915

In the long roll of heroes, may God keep
The blessed memory of that martyr-saint
Who lately passed to her eternal rest.

Her summons came and death her portion was
In the full prime and pride of vigorous life.
No fear nor shrinking showed she, and if once
The frail flesh shuddered at the coming doom,
The spirit never faltered. Even so
From Him Who gave Himself on Calvary,
A Price for this world's ransom, once was wrung
An anguished prayer the bitter cup might pass.

"Save this unhappy woman," some one cried,
Yet willingly she yielded up her life
And faced the deadly guns with quiet smile,
Upon her breast the emblem of her faith,
Her country's flag. "Unhappy"—she who knew
The joy of service and self-sacrifice?—
The utter bliss that comes alone to those
Who meekly bow to the divine decrees
With absolute surrender of the will?

Those weeks of calm and quiet ere the end
Were as a blessed boon, a Lenten time
For prayer and contemplation, when she learned
To see, not darkly through a glass, as once,
But face to face, and lifted up her heart
Unto the Lord, by faith with thankfulness.

"In view of God and of eternity,
I realize," she said, "that not enough
Is love of country, but to love one's kind—
To love one's fellow-man with such a love
That hatred or resentment cannot dwell
In the same heart. . . . Oh, this is Christ's
command."
And like the dying Saviour on the Cross,
She thought of those who wrought her final
woe
With only deepest pity, as she prayed,
"Forgive them, Lord, they know not what
they do."

Ah, happy faith! In that last Eucharist
The old familiar admonitions fell
On her awakened soul. "Lift up your hearts,"
"Give thanks," with meaning strange and
rich and new.
"The Body of the Lord, take ye and eat;
And may His precious Blood preserve thy
soul

And body unto everlasting life."
And strengthened and refreshed by that sweet feast,
She sang her Nunc Dimittis to the end.
" And here, O Lord, I offer and present
Myself, my soul and body. May they be
A reasonable, lively sacrifice,
Acceptable and holy in Thy sight."

The kindly priest, with keenest sorrow moved,
Who ministered to her last earthly hours,
Himself drew comfort from her brave address,
Her tender farewell, " We shall meet again."

Nay, not unhappy! Glad, and proud and free!
Free with the putting-off of mortal flesh;
Proud to be counted worthy so to die;
Glad that her death meant more abundant life
To those, her fellow-men, whom she had helped
To freedom, health and peace. Yea, all mankind

Must feel the value of her sacrifice.
And feeling it, we turn with humble hearts
Unto the Author and the Finisher
Of this, our race on earth.

Thou, who alone
Canst order sinful men's unruly wills,
Grant us to know that peace that she declared,
To feel that charity that she displayed,
To exercise such simple, loving faith.
Lord, we believe. Help Thou our unbelief!
And hear our echo of her latest prayer,
"In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me."

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